



City of Grand Rapids

Rosa Parks Circle Named One of 15 Great Places in America by the American Planning Association

APA Celebrates 10th Anniversary of Program, Recognizes 15 Great Neighborhoods, Streets and Public Spaces

10/04/17: GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. – The American Planning Association (APA) today named Rosa Parks Circle in downtown Grand Rapids, as one of five Great Public Spaces on APA's annual Great Places in America list, which marks the kickoff of the organization's National Community Planning Month celebration.

APA's Great Places in America program, celebrating its 10th anniversary this year, recognizes streets, neighborhoods and public spaces in the United States that demonstrate exceptional character, quality and planning—attributes that enrich communities, facilitate economic growth and inspire others around the country. The Great Neighborhoods, Great Streets and Great Public Spaces of 2017 are places that are unique and exemplary in their amenities and infrastructure, cultural identity and use of sustainable and innovative practices.

"Public spaces serve a number of functions within a community, from gathering places to recreational venues, and to satisfy these varied community needs requires thoughtful collaboration and planning," said Cynthia Bowen, president of APA. "These places demonstrate how to effectively create a sense of place that enhances the lives of all residents and visitors. Congratulations to this year's designees."

Designed in 1999 by internationally-acclaimed artist Maya Lin, "Ecliptic," is an exceptional work of placemaking art that firmly anchors the park in its local context, highlighting Grand Rapids' connection to the Grand River, legacy of creative excellence, and successful public-private partnerships such as that with the Frey Foundation that made the project possible.

A likeness of the park's namesake, Rosa Parks, commissioned in 2007 by the Grand Rapids Community Relations Commission, welcomes visitors to the foot of Rosa Parks Circle. "Stand Up for Rosa Parks" by nationally renowned Denver artist Ed Dwight is a reminder of Parks' life's work and a commemoration to those who fought for the equality and civil rights of others.

Rosa Parks Circle is a much-needed centralized public space in the heart of the city to host year-round community events such as ice skating and cultural festivals. The area has inspired the surrounding neighborhoods and attracted restaurants, galleries, shops and cultural anchors such as the Grant Rapids Art Museum.



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In addition to Rosa Parks Circle, APA also recognized the following public spaces this year:

- Mill Creek Linear Park – Bakersfield, Calif.
- County Home Complex – Greenville, N.C.
- Market Square – Knoxville, Tenn.
- San Angelo River Walk – San Angelo, Texas

“Rosa Parks Circle is a great success story of partnerships that invested in public space and community efforts to activate the park through diverse programming,” said David Marquardt, director of Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation. “This public space contributes greatly to the vibrancy and identity of our community. We love Rosa Parks Circle and are honored to see it nationally recognized.”

The City of Grand Rapids will celebrate the Great Places nomination on Saturday, October 28 with a full-day celebration event filled music, dancing, and free community activities.

Since launching the Great Places in America program in 2007, APA has recognized 275 neighborhoods, streets and public spaces around the country. Designees are selected annually and represent the gold standard in terms of having a true sense of place, cultural and historical interest, community involvement and a vision for the future.

For the fourth year, members of the public can suggest their favorite public space, neighborhood or street to earn a “People’s Choice” designation. Throughout October, individuals can offer suggestions via APA’s social media channels using the hashtag #APAgreatplaces. APA will select five finalists that the public can vote on via APA’s website. The “People’s Choice” winner is announced in early November 2017.

For more information about these public spaces, as well as APA’s Great Public Spaces and Streets for 2017 and previous years, visit www.planning.org/greatplaces. You can also find more information about National Community Planning Month at www.planning.org/ncpm.

The American Planning Association is an independent, not-for-profit educational organization that provides leadership in the development of vital communities. APA and its professional institute, the American Institute of Certified Planners, are dedicated to advancing the art, science and profession of good planning -- physical, economic and social -- so as to create communities that offer better choices for where and how people work and live. Members of APA help create communities of lasting value and encourage civic leaders, business interests and citizens to play a meaningful role in creating communities that enrich people’s lives. APA has offices in Washington, D.C., and Chicago. For more information, visit www.planning.org.